

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

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AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 12239

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR GW WB GE

SUBJECT: VATICAN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES FOR THE CATHOLIC
CHURCH IN THE GDR

SUMMARY. AN FRG REP (DUISBERG) IN THE BONN GROUP HAS
BRIEFED THE ALLIES ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES WHICH
THE VATICAN PLANS TO IMPLEMENT IN THE GDR IN THE NEAR
FUTURE. THE EFFECT OF THE CHANGES WILL BE TO NORMALIZE
THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GDR. END SUMMARY.

1. DUISBERG STRESSED THAT THE INFORMATION SHOULD BE
TREATED AS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL BECAUSE OF THE OBVIOUS
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FRG DOMESTIC POLITICAL SENSITIVITY. NEVERTHELESS, IT

SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE GENERAL SUBSTANCE OF DUISBERG'S REMARKS APPEARED IN A BRIEF ARTICLE IN THE JULY 12 ISSUE OF DER SPIEGEL.

2. ACCORDING TO DUISBERG, THE VATICAN HAS DECIDED TO BRING ITS POLICY IN THE GDR IN LINE WITH ITS GENERAL POLICY IN EASTERN EUROPE OF ACCOMMODATION TO THE EXISTING REGIME. IT INTENDS TO NORMALIZE ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GDR FOR PASTORAL AND NOT POLITICAL REASONS.

3. THE VATICAN PLANS SEVERAL STEPS IN IMPLEMENTING THE NEW POLICY. FIRST, IT INTENDS TO RAISE THE GDR ECCLESIASTICAL DISTRICTS ALONG THE INNER-GERMAN BOUNDARY TO THE STATUS OF INDEPENDENT DIOCESES. UP TO NOW, THESE DISTRICTS HAVE BEEN PART OF FRG DIOCESES. SECOND, THE VATICAN WILL CREATE AN ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE WHICH IS CONGRUENT WITH THE BORDERS OF THE GDR. THIS NEW ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE WOULD BE INDEPENDENT OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE FRG. BOTH STEPS WILL OF COURSE HAVE THE EFFECT OF FURTHER LEGITIMIZING THE BORDERS OF THE GDR.

4. IN ADDITION, THE VATICAN PLANS TO SET UP A GOVERNING BODY FOR THE NEW ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE. HOWEVER, IN PARTIAL DEFERENCE TO FRG SENSITIVITIES, IT WILL NOT BE CALLED A NATIONAL BISHOPS CONFERENCE AS WOULD BE NORMAL. FURTHERMORE, CARDINAL BENSCH IN EAST BERLIN WILL CONTINUE TO BE REPRESENTED BY AN FRG PRELATE.

5. THE EFFECT OF THESE CHANGES ON BERLIN IS NOT YET CLEAR. DUISBERG SAID THAT THE VATICAN HAS ASSURED THE FRG THAT THE CHANGES ARE NOT INTENDED TO AFFECT THE STATUS OF BERLIN. HOWEVER, SEVERAL POINTS MUST BE NOTED. THE DIOCESE OF BERLIN INCLUDES GREATER BERLIN PLUS PART OF BRANDENBURG. AS SUCH, IT HAS BEEN REPRESENTED IN THE FULDA CONFERENCE IN THE FRG. A FOLLOW-UP CONVERSATION WITH THE FONOFF INDICATED THAT THE DIOCESE AS A WHOLE -- INCLUDING THE WSB -- WILL ALSO BE REPRESENTED IN THE NEW GDR BISHOPS' CONFERENCE. IN ADDITION, THE NEW

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CONFERENCE WILL BE TITLED THE "BERLIN CONFERENCE." THE FONOFF IS UNCERTAIN HOW THIS SYSTEM WILL WORK IN PRACTICE. FINALLY, THE VATICAN IS NOT PRESENTLY CONSIDERING SENDING A PAPAL NUNCIO TO EAST BERLIN.

6. THE VATICAN HAS APPARENTLY NOT ASKED NOR HAS IT RECEIVED ANY CONCESSIONS FROM THE GDR IN RETURN FOR THESE STEPS.

7. DUISBERG SAID THE CHANGES WOULD PROBABLY COME INTO
EFFECT SOMETIME THIS SUMMER.
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